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UNCLAS MUSCAT 001540

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA, NEA/I, NEA/PPD, AND NEA/ARPI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [OPRC](#) [IZ](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMAN SPEAKS OUT ON IRAQ REFERENDUM

REF: A. MUSCAT 1534

[1](#)B. STATE 189909

[1](#)C. STATE 188987

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) As requested in several demarches, the Omani government gave strong public encouragement for the Iraqi constitutional referendum process in the days leading up to the October 15 balloting. Editorials have hailed the referendum as a historic opportunity to secure future Iraqi stability, and denounced armed groups that target civilians and reject the peaceful political process. End summary.

The Government Speaks Out

[1](#)2. (SBU) Further to ref A report on the Ambassador's October 13 discussion with Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, and consonant with demarche requests in refs B and C, the Omani government and press featured a flurry of statements and articles praising the historic opportunity of Iraq's October 15 constitutional referendum.

[1](#)3. (U) All major Omani media publicized a Foreign Ministry statement on October 13 under the headline, "The Sultanate expresses its optimism and hopes for a new era of stability." A representative excerpt on October 14 stated, "The Sultanate expressed yesterday its optimism with regards to the agreement reached among Iraqi political leaders about the voting on the draft of the constitution which is due tomorrow. A statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the Sultanate hopes that the new (constitutional compromise) will be a start for a new era that will contribute to establishing peace and stability in brotherly Iraq."

Favorable Editorials

[1](#)4. (U) October 15 editorials in the state-owned "Oman" and privately owned "Al-Watan" newspapers were supportive of the Ministry's statement and the referendum. Calling it a "decisive day for Iraq's future and for the region," the editorial in "Oman" extolled: "It is important and necessary that Iraqis vote today for the sake of unity, progress and reinventing life, and to disappoint those groups who care only about their interests and want Iraq to enter into an endless dark tunnel."

[1](#)5. (U) The "Al Watan" editorial on October 15 focused somewhat more on its call for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq, though it hailed the referendum as one of several elements that will lead to a new Iraq. Both editorials denounced armed opposition groups in Iraq, with "Al-Watan" calling for "cleaning Iraq of all armed groups targeting civilians and seeking to impose their opinion using a rifle."

[1](#)6. (U) The Embassy delivered ref B demarche October 15, and will monitor the press and government for post-referendum statements and reactions.

BALTIMORE